2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

764 Besides fighting, the dancers indulge in an orgy of destruction,
535 slashing at the bananas and *ficus* saplings (which surround the
721 swept courtyard) with their spears.

764 The dance was thus, traditionally, a common form for the ex-
535 pression by the dancers of a considerable range of emotions, vary-
● 152 ing from an intolerable burden of grief and fear to a recognition of and salute to the warlike quality of the dead man and a vivid consciousness of their own. And this last feeling passed easily into actual fighting.

764 To-day it is not so much into the excitements of warfare that
534 the feelings turn, but rather into those of love. Burial dances are
832 the occasions of much sexual display, of the beginning of some love affairs and the consummation of others, and this is nothing new. 'At a death people did not want war (though it came sometimes), they wanted love-making: they displayed the pride of their strength!' 'We speared one another . . . our wives called the war-cry when they saw the strength of their husbands.'

177 Dances of sexual display, on occasions other than burials, are
535 traditional among the Nyakyusa; but all our informants are
837 unanimous in declaring that both these other dances and the dances of burial are far more frequently followed by lovers' meetings than they used to be. For the enforcement of peace among the Nyakyusa has been accompanied by the prohibition of violence of any kind; and this has freed sexual passion from its rigid tradi-
[684] tional bonds. Girls are married young and engaged younger; and while formerly any man who seduced or even flirted with another man's betrothed or wife was speared or tortured by the husband and his friends if they caught him, such punishments are now illegal and the present fine of cattle is a far less effective deterrent. 'In the old days love-making only went on in secret; if a man stood and talked to a woman he expected to be speared. But now the Europeans have introduced the custom of making love openly!' (i.e. by forbidding the previous penalties.)

764 For all the younger men and women, save the chief mourners
535 and close friends, the quality of the burial dance is now pre-
832 dominantly and openly sexual. But the older people are, on the one hand, more conscious of its warlike associations and, on the other hand, inclined to regard the whole occasion more soberly than their juniors. 'There are two reasons for coming to a burial: the old men come to mourn their friend, they say: "Let us go and mourn him"; but the young men say: "Let us follow the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

765 beats out its monotonous noise. In the meantime
535 there may be uncontrolled persons running about, leaping, waving spears, not seldom casting a taunt, which is quickly taken up, and spears are thrown, and wounds, and even death, may be the result.

765 Sometimes the wailing takes place in the house, or in the open, just outside. It is interesting to watch
● 152 men and women approach the place of mourning: they come with all appearance of *sang-froid*, but suddenly emotion grips them, and they take up the wail with streaming tears. It does not occur to anyone that he should restrain himself; it was not for that that he came. Yet the recovery from this high-pitched emotion is just as rapid. There is a sudden hush, some one addresses to the widow the old, world-old, world-wide comfort, that all must die; and, amazing to relate, this is often received with laughter, not mocking laughter, but laughter intended to relieve the strain which all are feeling. Sometimes too, jesting, and even obscene language, are indulged in, with the same end in view. And as emotion rises
765 again, and this especially among the dancers, free rein
837 is given to looseness of language and gesture, and more definite evil follows in the darkness.

It is affirmed that all this looseness has arisen since the coming of the white man; but statements of the harm done by the latter are so common among the Konde and other tribes, that one may well be sceptical. The explanation given is that European government will not permit the old death penalty for adultery, and therefore it has become more common; or that

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

754 but I see them. It's taboo to speak. They must seek blood and they go
775 off; we fear them!

QUESTION: Why do you chiefs never speak out if you are throttled?

753 KASITILE: If I speak how many would there be to name? Very many!
[689] For us it's taboo to accuse a man of witchcraft, but the commoners
[554] accuse one another. Look you, do few people keep you company?
Many!

Like us chiefs, everyone comes. It's taboo for us to speak out, we fear. Look you, when Mwambene (Mwaipopo 116) and I were alone we feared to throw out the beer, we said: 'If we throw it out will they leave?' But when Kissogota came, he said: 'All right, I will throw it
● [152] out myself.' We fear the fierce great priests, the terrible witches, they are angry.[1] We shrink when they appear.

[622] The village headmen of the country call on the priests for help against us, they whisper by the fire, the priests come in their witchcraft,
[793] they call on my shades saying, 'Let us punish him', also they eat, together with the shades. Our shades never initiate anything, never; they look to the priests. But with a commoner the shade may initiate matters himself. Yes, people whisper indeed, but is that witchcraft? No! They whisper openly and ask, 'Why did you not perform the ritual?' But even although people are silent, still the shade comes
[688] saying, 'Why did you not perform the ritual? I am on the road.' He initiates the thing himself.

QUESTION: But don't people eat meat at the ritual of a commoner?

KASITILE: Yes, and if he does not celebrate it they accuse him, but they accuse him openly.

QUESTION: If the heir buries him with a few cattle?

688 KASITILE: If a rich commoner dies and the heir buries him with only
775 one cow, the shades are angry and the people also; their chilling
774 breath comes on his body, perhaps he falls ill himself, perhaps his child falls ill, but the people and witches do not meet together, people are angry here, and the shades there; all of them and the shades too, because he has celebrated with one cow only. People are angry because
[787] they wish to eat the meat. But the oracle says, 'The shades are angry.' It does not speak of people, it knows that people also are angry, but it speaks of the shades. And at the celebration he prays in the evening, the next day he calls people and kills a cow, and throws the sacred
[783] meat in the banana grove, saying, 'Here is your meat, father.' People say, 'Indeed he did wrong, his father was angry', but they do not confess saying, 'It was we', no, they say 'the shades' . . .

[826] We chiefs have bodies which are different, the commoners arrived
[554] first in the country, they ate raw food, we fear them saying, 'They eat raw food.' It is we who followed and brought fire. To us they confess

[1] *Imipago indosi mikalala.* The noun class implies size, ferocity, and dislike.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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heir witchcraft); to each other they say: 'It is your father.' Because they confess to a fellow commoner saying, 'It is we', he says, 'You e "eating" me, drink the ordeal'. The witch is driven out. But to us ey admit saying, 'It was we who were angry.' They do not fear us. ommoners are the seniors in the country; they arrived first.

It will be remembered that the commoners are spoken of as lack people' (*abatitu*) and that the first chiefs were 'pale' (*mwelu*) ut these words also have moral implications. 'It is said that a erson "has a black heart" or "has black blood", or "is black in is face towards us" when he is thought to be a witch, eating his llows, or when he is a thief, or a liar, or an adulterer, or dirty. ven though his body is light coloured (*mwelu*) the word "black" *titu*) is used of him metaphorically.' And *mwelu* implies innocent, ure, as well as light in colour. The comparable symbolism of 'nigger' nd 'white man' is all too familiar in Johannesburg or Charleston.

That Kasitile himself was much afraid of the commoner chiefs nd was relieved by the 'speaking out' was clear, and the people f the country as a whole were glad that the ritual had been elebrated, for they expected an increase in fertility. Some days ater Mwakyonde (148), came in and said, laughing, but half erious: 'Congratulations, Mwaipaja (G.W.). You have celebrated he ritual, we rejoice greatly, you give us fertility of the soil, you re a great priest.'

In some moods Kasitile was inclined to become a Christian, but e felt an obligation to the country as priest, and believed too trongly in the efficacy of the traditional rituals to abandon them. He said to G.W. one day, over a pot of beer: 'If it were not for the ritual I would get you to speak to the Europeans of the mission, and I would go with my wife Jane, and be baptized. If my son was old enough and had agreed to carry on the ritual I would do it; perhaps I will when I am old. . . . It is good to have one's heart washed clean, we are dirty inside. The Christians say to us: "You with your four wives each, you are all dirty, you love one and squabble with the rest." Well, it is so with me, I love Jane only; I would like to go and be baptized with her. But I fear for the ritual, I fear hunger, the hunger of the people. For I am the food of the country, I am the maker of food.'

We left Selya shortly after this and were not able to observe the effect of the ritual on political relationships in Selya. Kasitile lived another seventeen years, duly performing his functions, and in 1954 he was succeeded by his brother's son, James.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

number of separate plots per holding was less than where land was scarcer; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in those more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 15) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of this trend.

To emphasise the actual situation in 1955, let me reiterate the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Koroso's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 37). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scatter of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of tenure and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is quickened through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decisively entered a money economy and they have learnt to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their livings and the demand for better living will not be curtailed – nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movement of individuals between villages. Such movement was, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the idealised coeval basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a newcomer naturally cannot easily obtain land, nor as much land as he would desire even at a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so whilst the fear of witchcraft remains and whilst illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable aura of a place. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the obloquy resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological tension is being created now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that headmen and villagers alike remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must meet a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be allocated a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a headman tends to refuse to re-allocate some or all of it amongst his villagers and thus to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer. Men desiring to leave their own village try to get

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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my earlier labour migration enquiries in the Highlands, the village as a close residential unit is breaking up as the people are increasingly adopting the more common East African pattern of each family building its own homestead in its own land-holding. These northern Nyakyusa say that they must have their coffee plots next to their homesteads for the sake of continuous supervision, and that this is impossible (which is true enough) where men live close together in compact villages. Again, coffee plots, with their standing, permanent trees, have become a valuable item of inheritance; sons lose no opportunity of taking them irrespective of the locations of their coevals or of the identity of their immediate neighbours. The values of land, cash-crops and material progress are placed much higher than the traditional values of coevality; indeed, such traditional values are largely inconsistent with modern wants and aspirations.

Thus the Nyakyusa age-village has become almost obsolete and it would seem that it must inevitably vanish altogether even in the remaining conservative areas (e.g., in the east). Furthermore, its disappearance is leading to a distinct divergence between the Lake Plains Nyakyusa and those of the Highlands. How far this divergence will become permanent and basically significant cannot be foreseen as yet in this early stage. Clearly the compact village is best fitted to an arable economy of rice cultivation in the Lake Plains, and at least until there is further agricultural change it will persist as a most important social group.

Nevertheless, with its enhanced exclusiveness and relative social isolation and with renewed rivalry with its neighbours, the Lake Plains village is scarcely conducive to the encouragement of agricultural and economic development. Neither is it anything but harmful towards contemporary efforts in the politico-administrative sphere to reduce parochialism and to foster a sense of unity and co-operation beyond the village and the petty traditional chiefdoms. Whilst supervisory control of the land through the headman is in general excellent, reasonable and readily understandable to the people, yet the excess of restrictiveness, the competitive scrambling for vacated holdings and the jealous fears are surely more than merely unfortunate. There needs to be some modification to loosen the over-tight strings of village corporate ownership, to regularise the transfer of vacated holdings and to lessen the fears of village against village. These points are taken up again in Chapter V.

Cattle and Pastoral Requirements

Unfortunately, no great accuracy can be presumed for the Rungwe District cattle censuses, but the available figures are summarised in Table VI.

TABLE VI
NYAKYUSA CATTLE

	1953				1931	
	No. of cattle	*Acres per beast*	*Cattle per person*	*Cattle per family of 5*	*No. of cattle*	*Acres per beast*
Lake Plains	31,418	4.1	0.5	2.5	26,822	5.2
Central Region ..	19,390	7.1	0.4	2	19,160	7.2
N.E. Highlands ..	19,095	7.4	0.4	2	17,165	8.4
N.W. Highlands ..	22,974	8.0	0.4	2	16,855	10.9
Total:						
Nyakyusa.. ..	92,867	6.4	0.4	2	80,002	7.2

The indicated increase in the numbers of cattle may well be attributable only to improved census enumeration by the Veterinary Department.

Although 6.4 acres per head of cattle for all Nyakyusa country, and even 4.1 acres in the Lake Plains, might seem to be adequate in a country so

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

sitting there on the yard got up, as quickly as possible held her hands before her eyes and rushed off. This was because this man was her father-in-law. The strict social tabu in such circumstances is well know[22].

The next act consisted in shaving the girl's hair on her temples by the *unnyago;* the father was shaved by a younger brother of his in the same manner. (I cannot remember whether it was also the case with the mother of the girl.)

The old fashioned hut of the chief's wife.

Then the further ceremony took place again inside the hut. All the participants sat down on mats, and the *unnyago* accepted the complaints of the parents on the former conduct of their daughter. Sometimes the discussion between these parties, where the *unnyago* played the role of a mediator as is the case with the *unjobi* (or speaker) in the court, reached such a pitch of excitement that I thought a serious quarrel had broken out. The excitement was, perhaps, only of a ceremonial character; I was told, however, that in former times corporeal punishment has been inflicted, if, indeed, the girl had shown misconduct in the times before.

Next, the girl was instructed by the *unnyago* in her duties as a wife. These instructions were of a theoretical or moral nature concerning the correct conduct of the girl towards her parents also after the ceremony and towards her future husband. The practical part of the initiation instructions sometimes comes before this ceremony at the end of initiation. These practical instructions cover the preparing of food

[22] Cf. *Merensky*, p. 135; *Mackenzie*, p. 108 (at Karonga?). According to *Merensky* the daughter-in-law has to observe this tabu also towards the brethren of her father-in-law. All these persons are named *ukamoana*.